



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 28 December 2009 – 3 January 2010



31 Dec 1910 The **first powered flight in Hawaii** took place as James C. “Bud” Mars flew a Curtiss “Skylark” over Moanalua Polo Field. The P-18 biplane was constructed of spruce, ash, bamboo, steel tubing, and rubberized silk wings. See photo below.



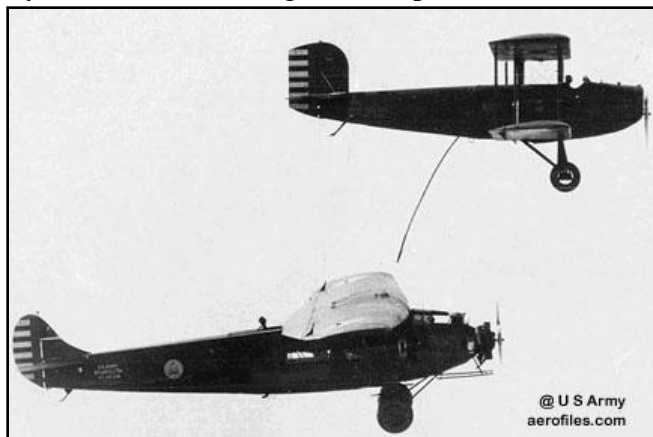
30 Dec 1914 The Army Signal Corps accepted their **first inherently stable aircraft**, the Burgess-Dunne S.C. 36 (at right).

An inherently stable airplane will usually return to the original condition of flight (except when in a bank) if disturbed by a force such as air turbulence. Thus, an inherently stable airplane will require less effort to control than an inherently unstable one.



1-7 Jan 1929 **THE QUESTION MARK.** To test inflight refueling as well as crew and aircraft endurance, the *Question Mark*, a modified Fokker C2-3 with a Wright 220 HP engine, flew to a world duration record of 150 hours and 40 minutes.

Named for its unknown capacity to remain airborne, the *Question Mark* was refueled 43 times by two modified Douglas C1 biplane tankers. It remained aloft until engine problems forced a



landing. The tankers passed 5,700 gallons of fuel plus oil, food, water, and other items (roughly 40 tons) to the *Question Mark*. All officers on the mission--Carl Spaatz, Ira Eaker, Harry Halverson, and Pete Quesada--became generals, as did two officers on the tankers: Ross G. Hoyt and Joseph G. Hopkins. The crewmembers of the *Question Mark* were each awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for the mission, while the refuelers received letters of commendation.



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3 Jan 1933 **Roles and missions:** General Douglas MacArthur, Army Chief of Staff, sent a letter to the commanding generals of all armies, corps areas, and departments entitled "Employment of Army Aviation in Coast Defense." This letter was based on MacArthur's agreement two years earlier with Admiral Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, giving the Army Air Corps responsibility for coastal defense. The letter stated that the Army air arm was "to conduct the land-based air operations in defense of the United States and its overseas possessions," and described this mission in operational phases both beyond and within the range of ground weapons, and in cooperation with land forces. With this mission in place, the Air Corps proceeded with plans to develop the necessary air forces, including long range bombers. Less than a year later, the Army Air Corps identified the requirement for a new heavy bomber, a requirement eventually filled by the B-17 (pictured at right).



28 Dec 1941 The **Alaskan Air Force**, (predecessor to the Eleventh Air Force) was established. It was activated at Elmendorf Field, Alaska, on 15 January 1942.

28 Dec 1943 **Early Electronic Warfare unit.** VIII Bomber Command formed a "Radio Countermeasure Unit" with 24 specially-equipped heavy bombers. Working with their British counterparts, this unit jammed German radars and radios, dropped chaff and flew "spoofing" missions in support of bombing missions, the D-Day invasion, and other allied operations.

3 Jan 1945 **Battle of the Bulge:** American and British forces counter-attacked the Germans under the protection of American airpower. While interdiction of supply lines and close air support of ground troops played a role in the Allied success, the most important benefit of Allied air superiority was to destroy 1000 Luftwaffe aircraft and thus prevent them from supporting the German army in the same ways. German General von Mellenthin summed up his own feelings as well as those of Field Marshall von Rundstedt in stating:

"The Ardennes battle drives home the lesson that a large-scale offensive by massed armour has no hope of success against an enemy who enjoys supreme command of the air."

Generalleutnant Adolf Galland, commander of the Luftwaffe fighter arm, wrote:

"The Luftwaffe received its death blow at the Ardennes offensive."

30 Dec 1945 **Kenney's successor.** Lt Gen Ennis G. Whitehead became the commander of Pacific Air Command, US Army (FEAF's redesignation as of 6 December 1945), taking over from Lt Gen George C. Kenney. Gen Whitehead remained as commander until 25 April 1949, by which time PACUSA was redesignated as Far East Air Forces.



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1 January 1947 The Pacific Air Command, US Army was redesignated **Far East Air Forces** (FEAF). Seventh Air Force in Hawaii transferred to Army Air Forces on 1 January and was then redesignated Pacific Air Command on 15 December.

2 Jan 1953 **Cessna's T-37 design won the competition for the Air Force's primary jet trainer** over 14 other entries. Side-by-side seating in the T-37 made it easier for the instructor to observe and communicate with the student. The T-37C, with provisions for armament and extra fuel, was built for export, and nearly 600 A-37 attack versions were produced. In all, nearly 1,300 T-37As, -Bs and -Cs were built before production ended in the late 1970s. The aircraft officially retired from the active U.S. Air Force inventory on 31 July 2009. See photo at right.



1 Jan 1967 The **USAF received 140 CV-2 Caribou aircraft from the US Army**. This marked the first time that an entire inventory of aircraft transferred from one service to another. The aircraft was redesignated the C-7 and went to 7th Air Force, which gave the NAF operational control over all fixed wing cargo aircraft in Vietnam. The CV-2 is pictured at left.

2 Jan 1967 **OPERATION BOLO**. F-4 Phantom pilots from the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing (TFW) shot down seven North Vietnamese MiG-21s in a sweep mission over the Red River valley to set a one-day aerial victory record. This MiG suppression operation was dubbed the largest air battle of the war and the most dramatic use of tactical deception. In a successful ruse, the F-4C pilots simulated Rolling Thunder F-105 strike aircraft to draw the MiGs out. The wing commander, Colonel Robin Olds (pictured at right), shot down a MiG and became the only USAF ace with aerial victories in World War II and the Vietnam War.



1 Jan 1988 **SAC's crew assignment policy changed** to permit mixed male/female crews in Minuteman and Peacekeeper launch facilities. One of the reasons for the end of segregated crews was to make missile-crew alert tour scheduling and substitutions more flexible.

29 Dec 1988 The Air Force received its **first operational F-15E Strike Eagle**. The F-15E can carry out deep interdiction missions without fighter escort or support jamming.